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CIA reportedly lured six of Pastora's aides to rival 'contra' group

WASHINGTON (AP) — A CIA officer lured six of "contra" leader Eden Pastora's top lieutenants to abandon him for a rival U.S.-backed umbrella group, leading to Mr. Pastora's quitting the anti-Sandinista war effort, according to officials of Nicaraguan rebel factions.

Contra officers said a man identified only by the cover name of "Armando" but known to them as a CIA contact offered Mr. Pastora's commanders military aid if they would join the U.S.-sponsored United Nicaraguan Opposition. The rebels were told that the military aid would come through UNO but not where it would originate.

Since 1984, Congress has barred the CIA from giving military aid and advice to the contras, although the agency is allowed to exchange intelligence with them. The CIA also has secretly funneled several million dollars to the rebels for political projects this past year, U.S. officials say.

Rebel officials said UNO's Costa Rican-based forces recently received five shipments of arms that were used to entice Mr. Pastora's poorly supplied troops to switch allegiances. Bosco Matamoros, a contra spokesman, said UNO's military supplies came from "international sources" but would not elaborate.

Asked about a CIA role in Mr. Pastora's downfall, CIA spokeswoman Kathy Pherson had no comment.

Mr. Pastora, now seeking political asylum in Costa Rica, is being detained by authorities. In a telephone interview from jail, he declined to discuss the alleged CIA role in his ouster but said: "The Americans want to remove one government and impose another. We want nothing to do with that."

The rebel officials, representing both Mr. Pastora and UNO, said they have known "Armando" as a CIA officer attached to the U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica. The rebels, including Alvaro Jerez, a leader of a Pastora-allied group, said "Armando" has been a CIA liaison to the rebels for several years.

The ouster of Mr. Pastora culmi-

nates three years of CIA attempts to force the charismatic, former Sandinista commander to unite with competing factions of the splintered contra rebel movement and accept greater U.S. control.

Mr. Pastora, known as Commander Zero during the revolution that ousted dictator Anastasio Somoza Debayle in 1979, broke with his former Sandinista comrades in 1981 and took up arms against them a year later. But he refused to join forces with the CIA-organized Nicaraguan Democratic Force, UNO's chief military arm, charging that many of its leaders had fought in Mr. Somoza's National Guard.

Mr. Jerez said Mr. Pastora believed he had an agreement with the State Department on sharing future U.S. aid in exchange for cooperation with other rebel factions.

Mr. Jerez said that when Mr. Pastora learned about the attempt to lure away his commanders, Pastora loyalists protested to the State Department and CIA headquarters.

UNO spokesman Carlos Ulvert disputed the claims that the ARDE commanders were lured away from Mr. Pastora. He said that several months ago, the ARDE commanders — not UNO — made "the first contact" in the talks that led to their desertion from Mr. Pastora.

But Carol Prado, a spokesman for Mr. Pastora's ARDE group, said the commanders' desertion was only the latest attempt to undermine Mr. Pastora, a popular but unpredictable leader. Ms. Prado said those U.S. efforts began as early as 1983 and initially involved threats to halt covert CIA aid to ARDE.

Last July, ARDE leaders said the United States again tried to oust Mr. Pastora in meetings at the White House between Adolfo "Popo" Chamorro, then second-in-command to Mr. Pastora, and Lt. Col. Oliver L. North, a senior adviser on President Reagan's National Security Council.